Hotel Metropole & Broadway Theater 1756 Broadway St. Denver Denver County Colorado HABS No. CO-64

HABS

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS No.: CO-64

HOTEL METROPOLE & BROADWAY THEATER

HABS COLO, 16-DENI

LOCATION: 1756 Broadway, Block 3, H.C. Brown's Addition

PRESENT OWNER: Bramalea Ltd./C.F. Cosmopolitan, Inc.

PRESENT OCCUPANT: Vacant

PRESENT USE: Vacant

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Metropole was a significant 1890's luxury hotel, designed by an unrenowned architect from Chicago, Colonel J.W. Wood. It is distinguished by its Richardsonian Romanesque revival west facade and grand and theatrical presence in the streetscape.

Built in 1891, it was boasted by the Colorado Graphic as one of the first "fireproof" hotels in the country, employing hollow clay fired tile units for all partitions, floors, ceilings, and walls. Part of the hotel was the Broadway Theatre (heralded by the Colorado Graphic as the first fireproof theatre in the West), an ornate vaudeville showhouse, whose interior was decorated in East Indian themes. The Metropole was recognized as one of the three grand hotels in Denver at the turn of the century, along with the Windsor Hotel and Brown Palace Hotel.

In numerous newspaper accounts of the times, it is apparent that building fires were a paranoia of the 1890's public, especially in hotels. It is for this reason, it seems, that much energy and promotional "hype" was expended by the hotel owners and management to assure the public of Metropole's absolute state of being fireproof. Technically it was not completely "fireproof", in that the all steel and ornamental iron structure was exposed. The innovative use of hollow clay fired tile units for all partitions, floors, ceilings and walls was, however, a major step in increasing public safety.

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PART I - HISTORICAL INFORMATION

DATE OF ERECTION: 1891

ARCHITECT: Colonel J.W. Wood

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Hotel Metropole and Broadway Theatre were constructed in 1891 by Mr. Wm. H. Bush, a principal investor for an English syndicate, the Windsor Land and Investment Company. The architect and general contractor was an unreknowned builder from Chicago named Colonel J.W. Wood, who supposedly had previously designed and constructed a number of hotels in Chicago and San Francisco.

The Hotel Metropole has had a number of distinguished guests, including President Benjamin Harrison. The theatre has also had quite a history of noted performers, including Sarah Bernhardt, Edwin Booth, George M. Cohen, and John Phillip Sousa. In 1955, the theatre was demolished to facilitate construction of the Cosmopolitan Hotel parking facility. Much of the buildings historical significance is derived from its association with its builder, Wm. H. Bush.

The building was designed when architects were caught in the midst of a confused battle between eclecticism and the "pure" late high Victorian architecture of the 1880's. One of these movements was termed Richardsonianism, named after the architect H. H. Richardson of Chicago, Illinois, and was concentrated in the provinicial regions of the West and the Middle West. The movement's expression was based on the natural strength and grandness of the American western landscape, and became apparent in sculpture, landscape painting and architecture of the time.

Richardsonianism was typified by revived Romanesque masonry construction with heavy, barbarian proportions and ornate flower and animal motifs. Most Denver architects, rather than initiating Richardson's building types, chose instead to borrow the rusticated stone and huge round arches which dominated Richardson's career for their own building types. Richardsonianism was generally a style (although similar in context to earlier Romanesque periods) which was a counter to eclecticism, even though it was also eclectic. Therefore, because so many 19th century architects used so many different building types as references for their own buildings, they often copied copies of copies.

Such was the case of the Hotel Metropole by J.W. Wood, who clearly took a number of generally unassociated architectural elements, and created a building that was active, lively, silly at times and eye catching in street scale, detailing and massing.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION - WILLIAM H. BUSH

The Hotel Metropole was built under the direction of William H. Bush for the Windsor Land and Investment Company, of which he was a principal investor. The same company is noted for building the luxurious Windsor Hotel, which he managed.

Mr. Bush was born in Ross County, Ohio in 1841, and principally resided there and Leavenworth, Kansas until 1871, when he moved to Central City, Colorado. There he opened the Teller House Hotel and began a prestigious career of hotel entrepreneurship and mining investment. Through the next 25 years he became a central character in the political, theatrical, mining, and hotel history of Colorado.

Some of his endeavors included managing the Windsor, Brown Palace, and Metropole Hotels, serving on numerous mining company boards of directors and managing the Broadway and Tabor Theatres. In addition, he was on the boards of the Denver Chamber of Commerce and Denver Stock Exchange, as well as being the initial incorporator of the Denver, Utah and Pacific Railroad. He passed away in October of 1899 after an extended illness attributed to acute appendicitis.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION - COLONEL J.W. WOOD

There exists relatively little information regarding Colonel J.W. Wood. It is known from newspaper accounts that he was possibly an architect and certainly a "contracting agent" in Chicago, Illinois. This is verified by a listing of a J. Watts Wood as a contracting agent in the 1891 Chicago City Directory.

The nature of Colonel Wood's sketchy background allows a number of plausible theories regarding the selection of Wood as the Metropole's "architect and builder". One can surmise that Mr. Bush, the developer of the Metropole, having at one time been the manager of the Tabor Opera House and the Brown Palace Hotel, decided that rather than hiring a local well-known architect such as Frank E. Edbrooke (who had already designed the Brown Palace and Tabor Blocks), he would contract a "designer" from the "East" causing great stir of public interest and promotion for the hotel. It also seems reasonable that, being the astute businessman he was, Bush probably hired Colonel Wood (who was relatively unknown and unlikely an architect) at a very competitive price and allowed the media to build Wood's reputation through printed speculation. If Colonel Wood ever did any early work in Chicago much of it was likely destroyed in the 1871 Chicago fire. In addition, if he had produced any later work in San Francisco, it probably was also destroyed in the 1906 ear thquake.

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PART II - ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

GENERAL STATEMENT

1. ARCHITECTURAL MERIT AND INTEREST

The Hotel Metropole is of architectural merit because of its Richardsonian Romanesque revival Broadway street facade. Of special interest on the Broadway Street facade was the terra cotta and copper detailed street entrance to the Broadway Theatre. The theatre itself was at the rear of the hotel and was one of the most distiguished and ornate theatres in the country at that time. Of additional merit and interest are the upper floor terra cotta window enframements and cornice work of the hotel.

CONDITION OF FABRIC: Fair (to be demolished).

3. SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Hotel Metropole is a nine-story building with basement and large 7-story light court open to Broadway Street on the west from the second floor up. Its main Broadway Street facade is organized into three divisions vertically (a north residential tower, a center light court, and a south residential tower), and six divisions horizontally (street level, second floor, floors 3 through 6, floor 7, floor 8, and roof cornice). Originally, the north tower was identical to the south, but in 1899, an additional north tower section was constructed.

At street level, the hotel entrance was originally in the south section, the massive round arched Broadway Theatre entrance in the middle section, and a restaurant entrance in the north section. The Broadway Theatre entrance was articulated in terra cotta in the Richardsonian tradition and ornamented with copper accenting.

The second floor of the north and south towers contained three Roman windows with ornate terra cotta window lintels and side enframements. The center light court originally had a 5-bay clustered column arcade supporting round arches and a Roman balustrade.

Floors 3 through 6 of the north and south towers contained three Roman windows per section with ornate terra cotta window lintel units. The center section was the open light court.

Floor 7 of the north and south towers contained a 3-bay clustered column arcade supporting a round arch and keystone. Between each arch was a terra cotta rosette.

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Floor 8 of the north and south towers contain a 5-bay clustered column window arcade with detailed flamboyant mouldings above.

Floor 9 originally only existed in the west half of the north and south towers. When the north tower addition was added in 1899, the new addition had a full 9th floor, and ox-eye motif windows were placed on the north tower's 9th floor Broadway Street facade.

The roof level of the north and south towers contain three barrel shaped Frankish turrets with Roman balustrade infill.

In general, the integrity of the exterior of the Hotel Metropole remains relatively intact with the exceptions of removal of the Broadway Theatre (1955) and alterations to the Broadway Street facade (1955).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

- 1. FOUNDATION: Stone Masonry
- 2. <u>WALL CONSTRUCTION</u>: Exterior walls are red pressed brick with terra cotta ornament.
- 3. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: Structural steel frame.
- 4. PORCHES, STOOPS, ETC.: (Not applicable).
- 5. OPENINGS, DOORWAYS, WINDOWS

The major feature of the street level Broadway Street facade was the massive and ornate Richardsonian round arch at the entrance to the Broadway Theatre. The arch sat on a quarry stone plinth and was detailed in terra cotta and copper.

Although mainly consisting of standard rectilinear Roman windows with crab ornamented terra cotta window entramements, the highlight of the second floor was the 5-bay Romanesque clustered pier columns with Norman cubiform capitals and bases. Atop the clustered columns were Norman round arches that supported a Roman balustrade and walkway connecting the north and south towers at the 3rd floor. At the second floor, the clustered piers and arches formed an arcade open to the interior light court between the north and south residential towers.

The Roman windows of floors 3 through 6 are relatively undistinguished except for crab ornament and dentil detailed terra cotta lintel enframements. One interesting feature (now missing) was the dog-headed gargoyles placed at the Broadway Street corners of the north and south towers. These terra cotta ornaments supported long hanging lamps which projected light onto the street and second level light court.

Floor 7 of both towers contained varying configurations of Romanesque clustered pier twisted columns with Norman cubiform capitals and bases. Supported atop the capitals is a Romanesque round arch with owl head keystone. Within the arch is an inner order of egg and dart motif, and above each arch is a terra cotta circle inscribed rosette.

At floor 8, the windows of the inner light court return to a standard Roman motif. In contrast, the Broadway Street facade of both towers contain a 5-bayed scheme of Romanesque clustered pier columns with Norman cubiform capitals and bases. Two of three clustered piers support a Romanesque round arch and flamboyant relief above. The third pier supports a terra cotta enframement with egg and ring motif.

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Of interest at the ninth floor on the west facade are the Renaissance ox-eye windows with terra cotta egg and dart motif frames, added at the same time the north tower addition was constructed in 1899.

The roof level parapet is formed by barrel shaped radial brick turrets that frame the stone balustrade Originally, atop all corner turrets there were massive terra cotta animal head sculptures. The roof is flat and has one mechanical penthouse.

The light court is formed by the north and south towers and the east wing of the building. The court is open to Broadway and extends from the second floor to the top of the building.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR FLOOR PLANS:

The basement contained kitchen, laundry, storage, and boiler facilities.

The first floor housed the hotel lobby and offices, cafe, restaurant and bar, and Broadway Theatre, with its grand entry arch and processional hallway off Broadway.

The hotel offices were wainscoted in Tennessee marble. Plaster relief panels on the walls and ceilings were trimmed with antique oak and bronze. The cashier's desk, private office, newsstand and telegraph office were also decorated with the same marble and bronze work. The bar was finished in a combination of prima vera woodwork, gold plate and sienna marble, with a mosaic floor of imported tile and marble, executed in the style of the 1st Empire.

The restaurant was wainscoted in St. Ann Gavotte marble and plaster relief, and the floor was an imported tile. The restaurant also exhibited a combination of oxidized silver, light Tennessee marble and maple. The cafe displayed a combination of Tennessee marble blended with antique oak and copper. The main toilet rooms on the 1st floor contained a light Tennessee marble and nickel plate and were illuminated by incandescent lighting.

The Broadway Theatre was entered off Broadway through a grand Romanesque round arch finished in terra cotta with copper detailing. The long 130' entrance hall floor was covered in imported English tile. The side walls were of polished marble and ceilings were colored fresco murals. Inside the auditorium, the stage, seating support and all stairwork were built with structural steel. A set of hydraulic cylinders operated the main curtain and the stage contained 4 trap doors. The stage itself was 40 feet deep and 75 feet high and had an array of ornate steel girder arches for main support.

The back stage consisted of 20 separate dressing rooms and 2 star dressing rooms. There was a carpenter shop in the rear and an artist's studio with paint loft 60' above the theatre. The main curtain was 34' feet high and 40' wide, adorned with a painting of "The Glimpses of India" by Robert G. Moses of Chicago. The box seating was richly designed in East Indian motifs. All 25 boxes were covered in East Indian jute velour and upholstered in deep olive green velour. Total seating was 1,600. House light fixtures were East Indian 5 light chandeliers plated in Roman Gold. The walls and ceilings were frescoed in blues and sienna by local artist Jens Eriksen. The proscenium arch was 38' in width and 32' in height.

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The second floor of the hotel contained the main party room, a bridal suite with an individual private dining room, gentlemens' and ladies' dressing and writing rooms, a smoking room, and numerous other private dining rooms. These rooms were furnished in natural mahogany, bronze trimmings, and gold plate Roman finish on door and window hardware. In addition, all walls and ceilings were artistically frescoed.

The third through eighth floors contained 19 rooms, 5 of which were added to the north tower in 1899. Originally the U-shaped plan had the rooms arranged around the inner light court with single loaded hallways at the exterior wall on the north and south towers and double loaded in the east wing. In 1899 when the north tower addition was constructed, the north tower hallway became double loaded. The light court itself is approxiately 30 feet wide and 90 feet long, extends from the second floor to the sky, and is open to the west (Broadway Street). The ninth floor originally only existed in the front (west) portion of the north and south towers, but in 1899 when the north tower addition was constructed, a full ninth floor was included.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 1. Orientation and General Setting: The Hotel Metropole faces west on Broadway. On the east is Lincoln Street with adjacent parking lot where the Broadway Theatre once stood. To the north is the Cosmopolitan Hotel and to the south is the United Bank of Denver Complex. Across Broadway to the west is the Brown Palace Hotel and nearby historic Navarre Building. Together these buildings make up one of the activity nodes and business hubs of downtown Denver.
- 2. Stairways: The main stairway was a grand staircase that connected the street level lobby to the second floor suites and private dining rooms. It was constructed in a complex motif of wrought iron and bronze, with marble treads and risers. One other minor enclosed egress stair was located to the rear of the building.
- Flooring: At street level, all floors except that of the bar were of imported tile that blended with the marble and metalwork. The bar room floor was composed of elaborate mosaic of bright shades of sienna marble, constructed in the style of the 1st Empire. The main toilet room floors were done in light Tennessee marble and accented with nickel plate inlay.

The second floor rooms and typical upper floor guest rooms were done in artistic designs of imported English tile.

Throughout the hotel 6,000 square yards of the finest Royal Wilton and Axminister carpeting were used. In addition, all lobbies and hallways were outfitted with Kurrachee and Oriental rugs.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The first floor bar and restaurant walls were finished in light Tennessee marble with scroll leaf plaster frames and antique copper and gold leaf trimmings. The hotel office walls were finished in light marble with antique oak and copper trim. The cafe had an oak wainscoting and was finished similar to the bar and restaurant.

The second floor was finished in natural mahogany with painted plaster side walls and artistic wall and ceiling frescoes.

The 4th, 5th and 6th guest floors were finished in natural cherry with copper trimmings. The 3rd, 7th, 8th and 9th floors were finished in natural oak with oxidized silver trimmings.

5. <u>Doorways, Doors and Windows</u>: One of the main features of the hotel was its grand arched entrance to the Broadway Theatre. The Richardsonian Romanesque arch was detailed in terra cotta and trimmed in copper. The main entrance doors and elevator assemblies were articulated in wrought iron and cast bronze.

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All windows of the upper floors were double hung, single pane, wood sash, set in a flat wall plane.

6. Interior Trim: The first floor was consistently trimmed in light Tennessee marble and oak. The second floor was trimmed in natural mahogany and copper. The upper floors were trimmed in natural mahogany, cherry or oak with either copper, bronze or oxidized silver accents.

All draperies throughout were of the finest silk and cafe/restaurant furniture was carved oak with leather trim. The six second floor private dining rooms were finished in natural mahogany and furnished in a style of Louis IV, Colonial or Romanesque. The furniture of the upper floors was of similar quality and taste as the special parlours. The china for the private dining rooms was Royal Worchester, Reddon, Dellnier, Copeland, Royal Vienna and Havilandware. The glassware was Royal Harvard and silverware was custom designed for the Metropole, with inscriptions on each piece.

- 7. Hardware: The original entrance doors and elevator grillework were of ornamental bronze. The second floor suites were outfitted with gold plate Roman finish on all door and window hardware. The 3rd through 9th floors had all exposed nickel plated piping and porcelain and nickel plated fixture hardware. The fixtures included porcelain tubs, embossed closet bowls, Tennessee marble slabs and backsplashes, all finished with natural oak and nickel plate trim.
- 8. Mechanical and Electrical Equipment: The hotel was heated with steam through individual radiators, supplied by a central boiler in the basement area. The lighting of the hotel was predominantly electric incandescent, although each room also had gas fired wall lamps. Although information is scarce, there seemed to be one, possibly two, manually operated elevators serving the building.

PART III - PROJECT INFORMATION

Current plans call for the demolition of the Hotel Metropole as well as adjacent Cosmopolitan Hotel by March 1983. This historical documentation of the Hotel Metropole was completed in March 1983 by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, architects. It is one portion of the historical/architectural recordation of the Hotel Metropole prepared for Bramalea Ltd./D.F. Cosmopolitan Inc. that also includes photo documentation of the building. The recordation conforms with the standards of the National Architectural and Engineering Record, U.S. Department of the Interior.

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OWNERSHIP/METROPOLE

1.	Windsor Land and Investment Co.	1891
2.	Denver Hotel and Theatre Co.	1899
3.	E.A. Colburn	1924
4.	Cosmopolitan Hotel and Broadway Theatre Co.	1925
5.	Fidelity Bond and Mortgage Co./Denver Sheriff's Dept.	1929
6.	Cosmopolitan Hotel Inc.	1930
7.	Can-Ran Denver, Inc.	
8.	Kinnickinnic Realty Co.	
9.	Colorado National Bank of Denver	1982
10.	Bramalea Limited/C.F. Cosmopolitan Inc.	1982

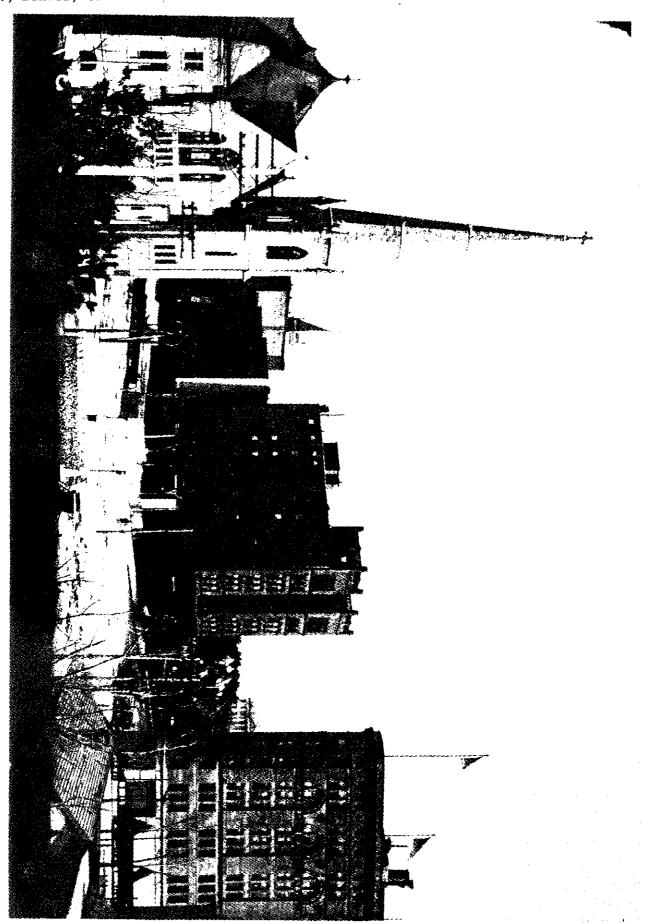
BIBLIOGRAPHY

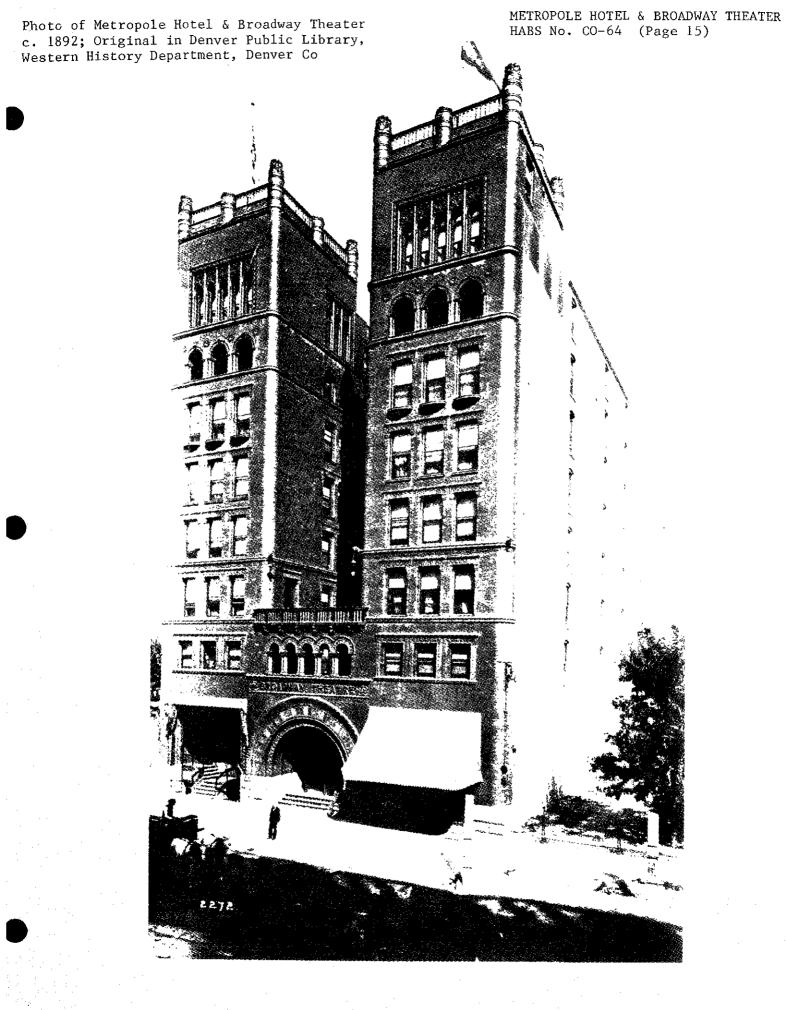
Colorado Graphic	April 25, 1891	P.1, C.1
Colorado Graphic	May 2, 1891	P.1, C.1
Denver Republican	April 4, 1889	P.6, C.1
Denver Republican	August 18, 1890	P.6
Denver Republican	August 19, 1890	P.1
Denver Times	April 28, 1891	P.3, C.3
Denver Times	May 25, 1891	P.3, C.3
Denver Times	June 29, 1899	P.8, C.1
Denver Times	July 25, 1899	P.5, C.1
Denver Times	November 24, 1899	P.7, C.6
Denver Post	December 31, 1982	P.25
Rocky Mountain News	December 8, 1889	P.14, C.2
Rocky Mountain News	October 9, 1982	P.6, 8
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Rocky Mountain News	June 27, 1946	
Board of Assessors City of Denver	March, 1983	
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Western Architect & Building News	February 1890	P.3, V.12
History of Colorado/ Baker & Hafen	1927	P.1261, V.3
Historic Denver	Richard Bretteil Historic Denver, Inc. 1973	P.149, Para. 3 P.151, Para. 4 P.154, Para. 1,2 P.228, Para. 1
The Brown Decades 1865-1895	Lewis Mumford Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1931	P.127-128

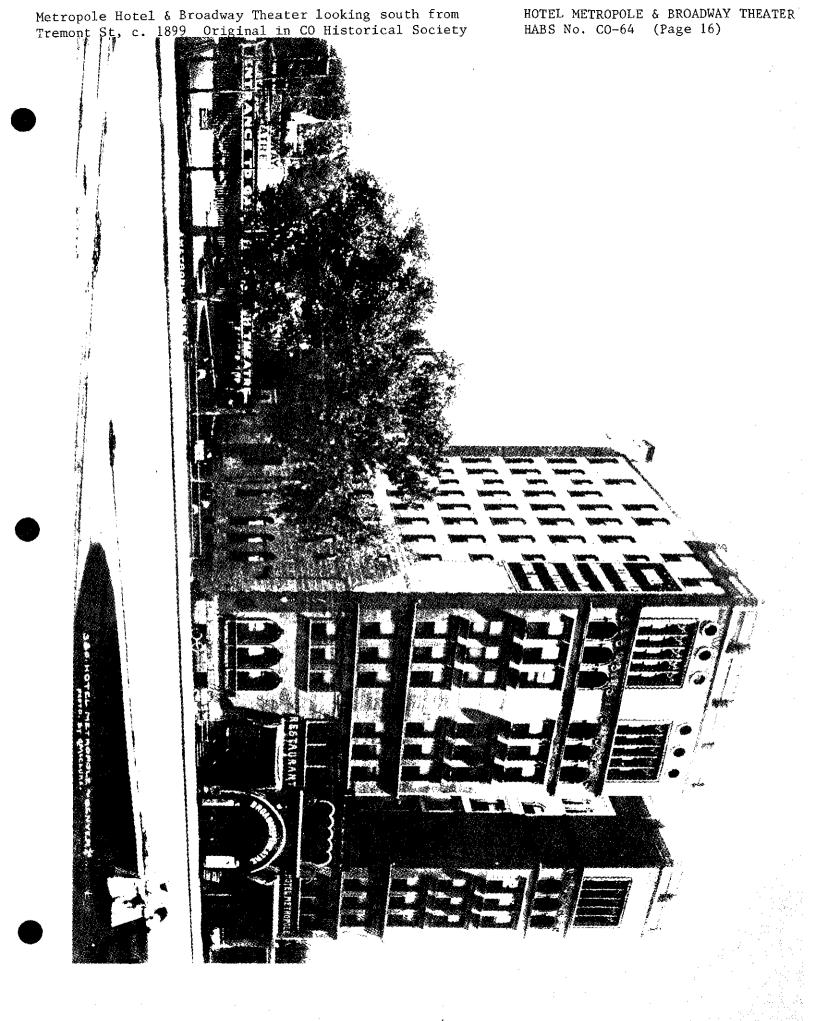
1931

Photo of Metropole Hotel & Broadway Theater looking south from Glenarm St, c 1892 Original in Denver Public Library, Western History Dept., Denver, CO

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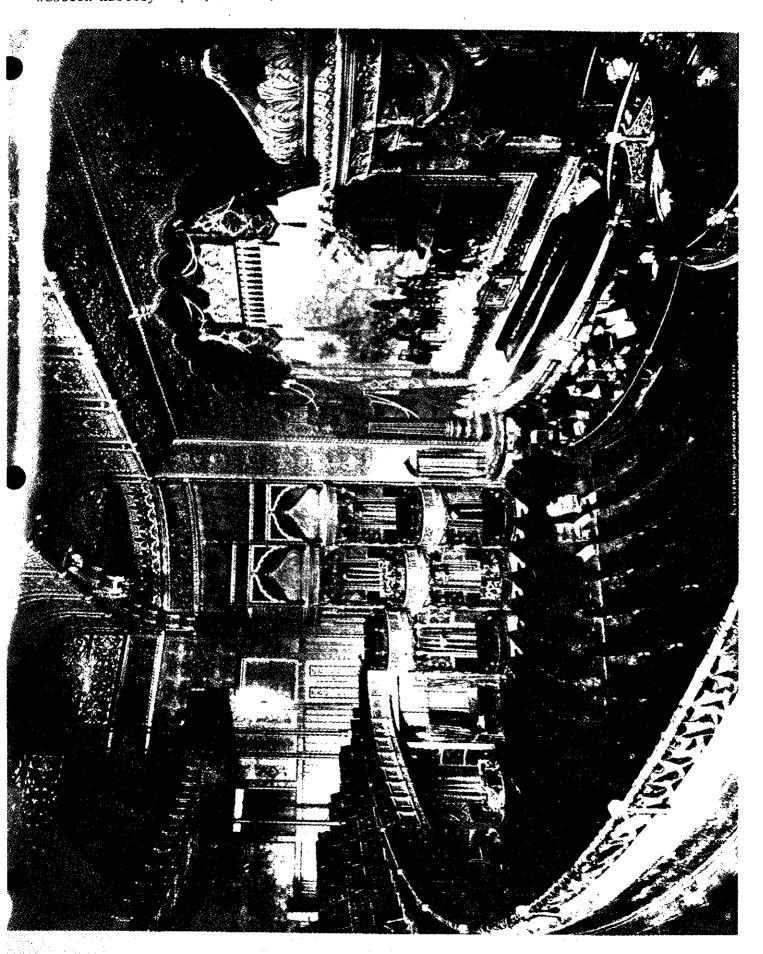






Interior of Broadway Theater, c. 1891 Original in Denver Public Library, Western History Dept., Denver, CO

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METROPOLE HOTEL & BROADWAY THEATER HABS No. CO-64 (Page 18)

Photo of architectural rendering of Hotel Metropole c. 1891; Original in Denver Public Library, Denver, CO

